

*Proceedings of the Asiatic Society.**(Wednesday Evening, 4th November, 1840.)*

Col. J. A. HODGSON in the Chair.

Library and Museum.

The following books, &c. were presented :—

Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopædia—Treatise on Malacology,	1
Philosophical Magazine and Journal of Science, 3rd Series, Vol. 16th, No. 101, and 105, February and June, 1840.	2
Proceedings of the Geological Society of London, Vol. 3rd, No. 67, 1840. ..	1
Oriental Christian Spectator, 2nd Series, Vol. 1st, No. 9, September 1840, ..	1
List of Works relating to India, published by W. H. ALLEN and Co.	1
History of British Birds, by W. YARREL, London, Parts 14 and 15; September and November, 1840.	2
Chinese Repository, Vol. 8th, No. 9, January, 1840,	1
Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China, and Australasia, February, 1840, Vol. 31st, No. 122. New Series, 8vo. ..	1
Transactions of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, &c. 1839, Vol. 52nd, Pt. 2nd, 8vo.	1
Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London, 1840, No. 11, 8vo.	1
Annals of Natural History, or Magazine of Zoology, Botany, and Geology, by JARDINE and SELBY, London, July, 1840, No. 32, 8vo.	1
Annales des Sciences Naturelles, Zoologie, et pour Botanique, par AUDOWINE et EDWARDS; Tome 12th, Paris, Août 1839, 2nd Series,	2
Column at Corygaum, to the memory of Captain STAUNTON, 1821,	1
Sketch to ditto, Madras 1818,	1

The Officiating Secretary submitted to the inspection of the meeting, an old Chinese Coin presented by W. E. Stirling, Esq. with the following memorandum—

“This is an old Chinese Coin. It was stated to have been coined before the Tartar Dynasty occupied China. It is presented through me by Captain ALCOCK, who obtained it at Macao. The twelve animals which surround the inner circle and inscription, probably represent the signs of the Zodiac, but not in such distinct characters as to be free from doubt. The Chinese characters of the inner inscription can probably be read by those versed in that language. The obverse side represents two Dragons. I am sorry I cannot offer any particular observations, but trust that this coin will be esteemed a rarity of no small interest.”

Read a letter from Lieut. A. CUNNINGHAM, from which the following is an extract—

“I have had a long letter from Lady Sale, and she promises me impressions of all curious coins that she may meet with. Sir ROBERT had been opening a Tope, but

was disturbed by DOST MAHOMED. POOR EDWARD CONOLLY too, had commenced work upon the great Khybar Tope, which is said to be the most magnificent in India, by those who never went two miles out of their road to see the great Benares Tope, which is 110 feet high.

"If I was at Patna, I would have the topes across the Ganges opened in two months. I can hear of nothing near this place. I hope however to be able to pay a visit to Faizabad, near which I hear, that there is a pillar.

"I have a short inscription of the time of GOVINDA CHUNDRA DEVA, of Kanouj, the predecessor of VIJAYA CHUNDRA DEVA, the prince mentioned in the long inscription of which Colonel CAULFIELD has sent you a copy. My short inscription mentions, GASALA DEBEE as the wife of GOVINDA CHUNDRA."

Read a further letter from the same officer, with reference to which the Officiating Secretary earnestly begged, that notice might be taken by any member of the Society, or indeed any individual whose position and inclinations might enable him to serve the cause of Antiquarian research in Behar, alluded to in the latter portion of the letter, which was then read as follows—

"I am now lithographing a large drawing of a beautiful silver patera of a Sassanian king on horseback, killing a lion—2nd Shahpore? It has an inscription which I am to get shortly.

"I have heard of no new genuine coins, but the forged coins are becoming plentiful, and I think I have discovered the forger. The fellow has not much character to lose, but, I think an exposure will put others on their guard against purchasing coins from him.

"The country north of Patna is full of topes, none of which have been opened:—

"1. The Kesariah mound, 20 miles N. of Bokhra, in sight of the Gunduk.

"2. A mound of solid brickwork, about 40 feet high, near Bassar.

"3. At Bokhra (*not* the Azimgurh Bokhra) 13 kos north of Patna, and 6 kos north of Singhea—a *pillar and tope* of solid brickwork; a *horizontal* excavation was made by a doctor of Mozufferpore 35 years ago, (therefore the first excavator of a tope), but nothing was found.

"Could you not manage to have an excavation made from the top to the foundation, in a perpendicular direction? Some one at Patna, or Mozufferpore, might superintend the work. The pillar also should have an inscription, which is probably under ground."

The Officiating Secretary submitted to the Meeting the reply from Major RAWLINSON of Candahar, to a communication which he had addressed to that able Antiquarian, in which he had begged him to undertake the duties of Corresponding Secretary in Affghanistan. The Society, the Officiating Secretary observed, would not fail to regret exceedingly the difficulties which interfere with Major RAWLINSON's accepting this office, and which he had requested him to undertake in common with the late Capt. CONOLLY, who working in a different part of the country, might have devoted his energetic endeavours to the furtherance of some of the main objects of the Society.

"It was with extreme gratification that I received your letter of September 9th, a few days ago, enclosing the official notice of my admission into the Asiatic Society, and conveying to me the very flattering offer of acting as Corresponding Secretary to your institution across the Indus; fond as I am of the study of antiquities, there could hardly be a greater *pleasure* to me, than filling the situation you propose, which would place me in communication with all the most skilful antiquaries and numismatologists of India, but really and truly, I have not the time to bestow on the duties of so fascinating an employment; being now in a laborious and responsible Political situation, I feel it incumbent on me to sacrifice, to a due fulfilment of my public duties, those pursuits which for many years past have formed my chief study and delight, and which when I am once fairly engaged on them, possess for me all the attraction that attaches the opium-eater to his drug. I have now brought myself to eschew antiquities upon principle, leaving unfinished several papers for which I am pledged to Societies in London, Paris, and Vienna, and it would be perfect ruin to me to be subjected afresh to the temptations which the office of your Corresponding Secretary would necessarily throw in my way. EDWARD CONNOLLY would have been a most zealous and efficient coadjutor, and would probably have had it in his power to command the requisite leisure, but, alas! you will have heard long since of his untimely fate, and I doubt if there is any one in the country qualified to supply his place.

"I should like, if I found during the winter that public business was not very pressing, to give you a series of letters to be published monthly in your Journal, tracing the outlines of such Historical and Geographical information as we possess regarding Affghanistan from the earliest ages to the present day, and inviting inquiry on all matters of interest referring to the different epochs, but I could promise nothing more than outlines, for I certainly have not the information (and I almost doubt its being procurable) to fill up details, or attempt any thing like analysis; something of the sort however certainly requires to be done; hitherto the numismatical discoveries have hardly been turned to any account; we have a long list of names, but there has been no attempt to appropriate them to the different tribes and dynasties of which, chiefly through the Chinese authorities, we can darkly trace the succession in the regions between the Oxus and the Indus, still less has there been any endeavour to affiliate these tribes, or to work out their descent into the page of modern history.

"I beg to return you my best thanks for the impression of Pottinger's cylinder, it is a relic at least as ancient as the times of Cyrus and Darius, and must have travelled from the banks of the Euphrates to the spot where it was found in the Paropamisian mountains. The inscription is in the Hieartic Babylonian character, and is in fact the usual formula (probably a prayer) found upon all these sacred cylinders. This character, which is the third or complicated class of cuneiform writing, is crept in a few signs conjecturally rendered by Burnouf, altogether undecypherable. It is probably syllabic, and certainly embodies a semitic language. The means of rendering it intelligible are, however, I believe, in existence, and if I ever return to Persia, and can devote a year or two to the task, I do not despair of mastering it by the assistance of the Zend literal cuneiform characters, which I perfectly understand, and which

is employed in the inscriptions, to render the translations from the Babylonian into the ancient Persian. The character being once decyphered, the language to which it is appropriated will no doubt be found cognate with the Phœnician, and I assert with confidence, that the knowledge thus obtained will open to us (always following the Mosai-cal early history of the world) an insight into the common original language of mankind, as thousands of bricks stamped with this writing are found in the foundations of the tower of Babel, and must have been placed there before the confusion of tongues, when the language spoken in the plain of Shinar, was, I suppose it will be admitted, the same that Adam and Eve used in Paradise, and this I believe is about the ultimate limit that antiquarianism reaches; joking apart, however, there is no doubt but the reading of this character will give us a decent knowledge of the history of Assyria and Babylonia from Nimus to Sadanapalus and Nebuchadnezzar; the records are most ample.

"The inscription on Hutton's antique, gives the title of the king as Palash (the Volagases of the Greeks) and from the style of the Pehleivee writing, probably refers to the Sassanian monarch of that name; but I have not yet satisfied myself as to the exact meaning of the entire legend. I have a vast number of impressions of Sassanian gems with legends, and will endeavour some day to give you a paper on them; but the subject is very obscure, and requires a still greater field of collation, than I have hitherto succeeded in accumulating.

"Coins are scarce in this part of the country, and the nomenclature of Bactrian and Melo-Scythian numismatology is, I fancy, pretty well exhausted, but all the useful part of the science requires, as I have already observed, still to be elaborated."

The Officiating Secretary submitted a note of charges for the printing of Part 2d, Vol. II of the Researches of the Society, and again suggested that a volume of Transactions might be prepared in octavo, should the Committee of Papers determine that the materials, which the Officiating Secretary was prepared to submit to them, were of a nature to admit of publication; the octavo form was, the Officiating Secretary observed, of advantage, not only as regarded the saving of expence, but also for facility of carriage, which was a matter of some importance for a Society which communicated with corresponding members at so great a distance as did the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

(Suggestion referred to the Committee of Papers.)

Read a letter from Capt. T. S. BURT, of which the following is a copy—

"Since my letter to you of the 19th October, I have been over to Chitore, and taken facsimiles of the inscriptions I met with there; their age is *about* 750 years, as well as I can make out; Tod speaks of those on the lofty pillar, but not of two others, which I found in an old temple there; I shall defer sending them to Calcutta for the present.

"I have found some *images* of marble at Ajmere, 650 years of age, with inscriptions on their pedestals.

" I am now about to proceed to mount *Aboo*, celebrated by Tod, and I hope to find some Pali writing, as well as other characters there.

" My principal object in writing to you now, is this—my brother of the 64th states, that when looking for my *lost* drawings either in the Society's apartments or in the Mint, he found a number of facsimiles of old inscriptions bearing my signature, which were thrown aside in consequence of JAMES PRINSEP's illness; now as many of them, a few in *particular*, were very valuable, and of considerable age, as the pillars upon which I found them testify, I think it right to bring the circumstance to your notice, with a hope that you will not allow them to lie any longer as they now do, 'unnoticed and unknown.' "

The query put by Capt. BURT, regarding the fate of his inscriptions, was directed to be referred to the executors of the late Secretary, Mr. JAMES PRINSEP.

Read a report from the Officiating Curator to the Society's Museum, together with the following observations recorded by the Officiating Secretary, in submitting that Report to the Committee of Papers.

" I have the honor to submit to the Committee of Papers, the accompanying report by our present Officiating Curator. The zeal with which Mr. PIDDINGTON is entering on his task of arresting the progress of decay, will I trust be as grateful to the Committee, who were the cause of his temporary appointment, as his labours are certain of being useful to the Society."

" TO H. TORRENS, Esq.

" DEAR SIR,

" *Officiating Secretary of the Asiatic Society.*

" Having in pursuance of your letter of 27th December last assumed charge of the Museum of the Asiatic Society, as Officiating Curator, on 1st instant, I have now, in obedience to the resolutions of the Committee of Papers referred to in it, to submit my Monthly Report.

" *Palæontological, Geological, and Mineralogical Department.*—The first impression which a cursory inspection of these departments of the Museum has given me, is a strong one of the sad dilapidation going on amongst them; partly in consequence of trusting to the very perishable recording, which ink, paper and paste admit of in a climate like this, and partly from the almost entire absence of any general or serial catalogues to the various collections; many of which, again, have evidently been broken into, for the purpose I presume of completing other arrangements? but of no such arrangements, whether completed or left incomplete, has it seems any note or register unfortunately been left in the Museum. I have written to my predecessors on this subject, to ascertain if any records of any kind exist, and I yet trust we shall be able to rescue something to guide us in the sad confusion which now prevails.

" I may briefly state a few facts in confirmation of what is here said. In our rich Palæontological collection, no registers or catalogues, beyond the few lists printed

in the Journal exist, that I can yet discover; and valuable specimens are fast losing their labels of names, and above all, of localities. In our Geological series I find, amongst others, even those of Gerard, Voysey, and Franklin—the first particularly of unique specimens, collected often at the risk of his life at 16 and 18,000 feet of elevation, midst the snows of the Himalaya, on the frontiers of Chinese Tartary—all going to utter confusion, through the growing indistinctness of the ink, and the ravages of damp and insects. Of the valuable collection of the Lavas of Vesuvius, presented by Sir EDWARD RYAN, though of this the Catalogue exists, yet only thirty-six out of nearly a hundred specimens can yet be found; I omit for brevity's sake, further details of this nature.

“I have then thought it of urgency to confine myself almost wholly to arrest this dilapidation, and if possible, so to place every thing upon record as it now exists, or can be ascertained, that at all events farther mischief in this way may be stopped, and the records rendered as enduring as paint and printing can make them. The Museum book of “Geological collections,” sent herewith, will shew what I propose doing for every series; and I have arranged in Case No. 8, Frame No. 1 (to the right hand below the stair-case) Dr. GERARD's series, in such order, with its separate little book of reference in the case, that it is available for the study of visitors and members, and when the serial catalogue is printed, it will be beyond the reach of any thing but wilful confusion for a long period of years.* I shall be happy to have the opinion of the Committee on this plan of arrangement, and these views. My own feeling and judgment on this point is, that nothing could be more lamentable, and more discouraging to the progress of Indian Science, than the fact that collections, which men have almost literally laid down their lives to obtain, should thus be lost to their memory, and to the ends of Science.

“*Osteological Department.*—In this division the want of cases for preserving the smaller skeletons from the effects of dust and dirt is much felt; and I beg to submit this matter particularly to the attention of the Committee; for several of our skeletons are rare and valuable, and even a common one costs time and expence to replace, or repair it. The small skeletons are particularly liable to dilapidation when dusting, and from the incautious handling of visitors.

“*Mammalogical Department.*—In this again we are entirely without glass-cases, and in spite of daily care, much dilapidation must be going on, which is but too evident in many of the specimens.

“*Ornithological Department.*—This and the following department are by far the best preserved of our collections, being fully provided with cases.

“*Reptiles, Fishes, &c.*—Provided with cases, and generally in excellent preservation. Mostly named, but no catalogues. The spirits of wine having partly evaporated from many of the jars and bottles, it has been necessary to fill them up, which occasions some extra expence. I am in hopes of at least diminishing this evil in future,

* Five series in all, are arranged, comprising 293 specimens, but only one is placed in a case for inspection.

by the precaution of cementing over the stoppers, which, with their current duties, and the preparation of the additions to the Museum, mentioned hereafter, has been the standing employment of the Curator's Assistants.

" Additions to the Museum this month have been—

" 1. A valuable series of Geological specimens from Brimhan Ghaut, on the Nerbudda, to Omarmuntuck, the source of that river, by Dr. SPILSBURY—*Arranged and Catalogued.*

" 2. The splendid skeleton and skin of the Gaur, from Chota Nagpore, by Major OUSELEY—*Skeleton mounted, skin suspended, being imperfect.*

" 3. Skeleton of the Eagle formerly in the Society's compound—*Mounted.*

" 4. A fine specimen of the Hematronus undulatus—*From C. P. White, Esq. Midnapore; stuffed. Duplicate of one in the Museum.*

" 5. A pair of the young of the Cheel, Falco ater—*Stuffed.*

" 6. A fine specimen of the Machal, Falco ——— ? (Purchased, not previously in our collection)—*Stuffed.*

ASIATIC SOCIETY'S MUSEUM,
30th November, 1840.

I am, Sir,
Your's obediently,
H. PIDDINGTON.

The Officiating Curator submitted his report on the Mineral specimens sent from Rajpootana by Capt. BURT, under the supposition that they were of the nature of Coal. Mr. PIDDINGTON observed, that it has no relationship to the Coal whatsoever, for it is infusible at a heat which blisters platina. It is one of the Titaniferous Oxigen of iron. He likewise submitted the following list of specimens as desiderata for the Osteological branch of the Museum :—

" *Skeletons.*

- { Neel Ghye.
- { Samur, 4 horned Deer of Sumbhalpoor (Kotarn ?)
- { Buffalo.
- { Gayal.
- { Garial.
- { Alligator (large.)
- { Lion.
- { Leopard.
- { Lynx.
- { Hyæna.
- { Jyo, or wild Dog of Bundlecund.
- { Do. or do. do. of Nepal.
- { Do. or do. do. of Affghanistan.
- Pangolins.
- Tapirs of Tenasserim Province.
- Dugong of Singapore.

For the presentations and contributions the thanks of the Society were accorded.